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H.B. 5531 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CARE AND TREATMENT OF PERSONS WITH MENTAL  
ILLNESS AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and Respective Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Daniel Schumacher and I am a resident of Newington, Connecticut.

I am actively involved in Advocacy Unlimited, Inc., as an Operator for the statewide Young Adult Warmline where I provide phone based peer support to other young people who are trying to connect with resources and find motivation to achieve their goals.

I am here today to testify in opposition to H.B. 5531. The reason I am testifying today is because I have been through many inpatient hospitalizations as well as outpatient programs.

I have not been restrained or forced to do something like that, but I have felt coerced into treatment. For example one time I had cut my arm a little and when my mom found out she called the police. The police arrived and they forced me to get into the ambulance and forced me to go to the hospital. I did not want to go to the hospital at this point and was in no danger to hurt myself anymore. When in the hospital, I felt like I had to comply with what they told me. If I did not comply with what they wanted I would just stay there longer.

This is what got me to do Electro Convulsive Therapy (ECT). If I knew the effects I would not have gone through with this process. Due to the ECT on my brain I have had significant memory loss and parts of my life have become a blackout where I cannot remember anything. This is a scary to me because who knows what I did during those times, I only know from stories people tell me. This is significant because the forced treatment of ECT dramatically affected my life.

Currently it is estimated that 25 percent, or about 1 out of 4, Connecticut residents will experience a "mental illness" in their lifetime. This is a huge part of the population, and if forced treatment is put into a bill many people's constitutional rights will be infringed upon.

If people lose their right to refuse treatment, then they will lose their right to make choices on their own even though they are an informed adult. This means that people can make judgement of someone and then they will have to undergo treatments because of someone else's opinion.

H.B. 5531 states that a conservator can be sought with the authority to force compliance in the case that, "no less intrusive beneficial treatment," is available. After being impatient I really had no choice but to comply with my discharge plan. Had I not agreed to an intensive outpatient program and continued care they would not have let me leave.

A huge part of my experience is also about the fact that they gave me lots of pills and they did not really work. When I did research and chose medicine myself and talked to my doctor about it, it ended up being the most helpful. It took a while to find the right combination of medication, and I'm not sure if this bill passes into law that we will allow for people to seek a provider that will work with them to find the best plan for their treatment

In conclusion, my life is no longer lived contemplating death or living in the bottom of a bottle. It was my free choice decisions that ended up being the most helpful steps towards my recovery.